

Lurie Cancer Center COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT UPDATES



Brewed Conversations: Fostering Meaningful Community Dialogue

FEBRUARY 2025

Sip & Savor and the Lurie Cancer Center built on their commitment to community dialogue by hosting another impactful “Brewed Conversations” event this February. This session, Dr. Marquita Lewis led attendees in meaningful discussions centered around self-care, healing, and community support on Saturday, February 8th. Key themes and areas of focus included:

- Give yourself grace: A reminder to be gentle and compassionate with oneself.
- Normalize healing: Encouraging open conversations about the healing process.
- Self-love: Emphasizing the importance of prioritizing personal well-being.
- Put your mask on first: Highlighting the need for self-care before caring for others.

Dr. Lewis shared three pivotal points for attendees to reflect on:

- What does it mean to take care of myself? (Me): Focusing on individual well-being.
- What does it mean to be in partnership? (Us): Emphasizing the importance of supportive relationships.
- What does it mean to be community? (We): Recognizing the strength and support found in community.

A powerful takeaway from Dr. Lewis was, “Advocate for yourself, but have a team and community that advocates for you.” She also stressed the importance of clear communication with healthcare providers, recommending that individuals bring a list of questions and concerns to appointments to ensure they receive the information they need. Brewed Conversations happen every second Saturday at a Sip and Savor location. The next session will be May 10th, 10am-12pm, 5301 S. Hyde Park Blvd. Participants receive a FREE cup of coffee or tea.

Upcoming Events

HEALTH IN EVERY HUE

May 3, 2025

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Timothy Center

4351 S. Drexel Blvd, Chicago

[For more information](#)

BREWED CONVERSATIONS

May 10, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Sip and Savor, Hyde Park

5501 S. Hyde Park Blvd., Chicago

[For more information](#)

CANCER SURVIVORS’ CELEBRATION WALK & 5K

June 1, 2025

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Grant Park, Chicago

Columbus Dr. & Roosevelt Rd.

[For more information](#)

PACHACAMAK FOUNDATION MONTROSE BEACH CLEAN-UP

June 7, 2025

8:00 a.m. - 10 a.m.

4400 N Lake Shore Dr. , Chicago

[For more information](#)



Hispanic Breast Cancer Clinic Update: New Location, Continued Commitment

Lurie Cancer Center is excited to announce that the Hispanic Breast Cancer Clinic has moved from Prentice Women's Hospital to a new location in Old Irving Park. This move, which took place in January 2025, marks a new chapter for the clinic, allowing for greater accessibility for many of our patients.

- **Leadership and Staffing:** While the move involved a change in leadership, with Dr. Rozina Chowdhery now serving as the new PI, the clinic maintains its commitment to providing care with Spanish-speaking providers.
- **Patient Impact:** In its first 1.5 years, the clinic has served over 200 unique patients, and continues to offer free second opinions for Hispanic breast cancer patients.
- **Research and Collaboration:** The clinic has achieved significant success in research collaborations, with Hispanic patients clinical trial accruals increasing in 2023-2024.
- **Community Partnerships:** Support from numerous community organizations, including Nana's Tatas, ALAS-Wings, PRCC, and Sisters Working It Out, plays a crucial role in outreach efforts.
- **Future Plans:** The clinic is working to secure grant funding to expand services, and exploring new ways to promote the clinic and increase patient access. A focus remains on recruiting more Hispanic patients into research studies.

The Lurie Cancer Center is excited about this new chapter for the Hispanic Breast Cancer Clinic. With its new location, dedicated staff, strong community partnerships, and ongoing commitment to research, the clinic is well-positioned to expand its services and further improve access to high-quality breast cancer care for the Hispanic community.



Community Member Testimony: Sharon Dorsey Finds Compassion and Understanding with Sisters Working It Out

When Sharon Dorsey's daughter received a breast cancer diagnosis, she found compassionate support from Sisters Working It Out. 'Deborah Moore spoke to me as if she had known me and my daughter for many years,' Sharon recalls, emphasizing the organization's empathetic approach. 'It is nice when people understand and not judge your situation, but help you in words and deeds.'

Sisters Working It Out is dedicated to addressing the unique needs of women of color across the cancer journey. They provide comprehensive care, tackling health disparities and social determinants by offering access to vital healthcare resources and support. Their mission centers on eliminating the burden of cancer disparities, ensuring that women have the tools and support they need to navigate their diagnosis and treatment.

The organization's annual 'Day of Beauty' event, which provided pampering and resources for survivors, was particularly impactful. Sharon notes, 'I cannot thank Deborah Moore and the team at Sisters Working It Out for going the extra mile offering assistance to my baby.' This exemplifies Sisters Working It Out's dedication to providing both emotional and practical support, playing a crucial role in the cancer journey.





Bridging Gaps and Building Trust: The Chicago Chinatown Patient Navigation Program

Lurie Cancer Center is proud to highlight the vital work of the Chicago Chinatown Patient Navigation Program, an initiative dedicated to ensuring everyone in Chicago's Greater Chinatown area can access essential cancer care. Navigating healthcare can be challenging, especially for immigrants facing language barriers or unfamiliarity with the system. This program helps bridge those gaps.

A COMMUNITY LIFELINE: PN 1.0

To address low cancer screening rates among immigrant women, the Chinatown Patient Navigation Program 1.0 (PN 1.0) launched in 2013. This initial phase was a collaboration between Northwestern University, the Chinese American Service League (CASL), Mercy Hospital & Medical Center, and Rush University Medical Center. Bicultural and multilingual Patient Navigators quickly became a lifeline. They guided women through appointments at Mercy Hospital, explained complex medical information simply, and connected them to CASL and other community resources.

When healthcare laws changed, these navigators also helped women understand and enroll in insurance plans, expanding their crucial support. This dedicated work during PN 1.0 connected hundreds of women to screenings, leading to dozens receiving vital early cancer diagnoses.

GROWING TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS: PN 2.0

Today, the program, now in its Chinatown Patient Navigation Program 2.0 (PN 2.0) phase, has grown to serve both men and women, covering all recommended cancer screenings. It continues to adapt, exploring new ways, like virtual support, to reach people effectively.

However, challenges remain. According to navigator Ivy

Leung, finding transportation to appointments is often the number one issue for patients, a problem made worse after the closure of Mercy Hospital in 2021. Language barriers also persist, and navigating insurance or scheduling appointments can feel overwhelming for many, particularly older residents or those who feel isolated. Recent conversations within the PN 2.0 program with men in the community revealed they often feel under-served by health outreach and face unique barriers, wanting more health education tailored to them and help overcoming issues like high medical costs.

MORE THAN JUST TRANSLATION

This is where the Patient Navigators make such a difference. They do much more than just interpret. They build trusting relationships, acting as advocates for patients with doctors and insurance companies. They provide appointment reminders, help arrange transportation, and offer a friendly, knowledgeable guide through a potentially intimidating system. Crucially, they help patients overcome practical hurdles related to insurance, finances, and other life circumstances that impact health.

Working closely with community partners like CASL and the Chinese Cancer Support Group, the navigators offer culturally sensitive support that truly understands the community's needs.

The Chicago Chinatown Patient Navigation Program, through both PN 1.0 and PN 2.0, powerfully demonstrates how dedicated, community-focused support can break down barriers to healthcare. It underscores the ongoing importance of programs that build bridges and empower individuals to take charge of their health.



Screening Madness: Teaming Up for Colorectal Cancer Screening

MARCH 2025

On March 20th, Lurie Cancer Center joined forces with the Blue Hat Foundation and the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium to host “Screening Madness” at Whirlyball, a lively event with an NCAA basketball tournament theme. This event, held during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, brought together the community to promote the importance of early detection and screening. Attendees had the unique opportunity to play Whirlyball, go bowling, and network with fellow community members, creating a fun and engaging environment for a vital cause.

Candace Henley, founder and Chief Survivor Officer of the Blue Hat Foundation, shared her powerful personal story of being diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a young age and the ongoing effects she faces. Her message emphasized the critical need for education on symptoms of colorectal cancer and screening and the importance of overcoming the stigma associated with it.

“Screening Madness” was created in response to the concerning rise in colorectal cancer cases among young adults, particularly within African American communities. This event aimed to make a real difference in the fight against colorectal cancer. The Blue Hat Foundation is dedicated to educating, raising awareness, and providing resources for free screenings in minority and medically under-served communities.

Everyone 45 and older is encouraged to step up to the line and prioritize their colorectal health by taking the screening pledge. Together, a *slam dunk* in early detection and prevention can be achieved.



Advancing Equity in Clinical Trials: Dr. Dario Roque and EMPACT Chicago

Lurie Cancer Center is proud to feature the work of Dr. Dario Roque and the EMPACT Chicago project. This initiative directly addresses a critical need: enhancing minority participation in gynecologic cancer clinical trials. While these trials are essential for developing effective prevention, early detection, and treatment, women of color are consistently underrepresented.



EMPACT Chicago, supported by Bears Care, actively breaks down barriers that hinder community involvement. These include:

- Historical factors that fuel skepticism.
- Socioeconomic challenges such as access to transportation and insurance.
- Cultural factors, including language differences.
- Structural issues like restrictive trial criteria and location.

These barriers, along with stigma, impede participation. EMPACT Chicago utilizes community outreach, lay recruiters and navigators, and a centralized database to connect minority women with gynecologic cancers to relevant trials. Provider engagement is also a key focus, recognizing the importance of trusted medical professionals in community outreach.

With new support in 2024, EMPACT Chicago is expanding its community-focused efforts:

- Refining its web platform (empactchicago.com) to increase accessibility through Spanish and Polish translations.
- Developing a user-friendly mobile app to reach more individuals.
- Expanding community outreach events to build trust and awareness.
- Strengthening partnerships with advocacy groups to extend its reach.
- Providing up-to-date trial information to the community.

EMPACT Chicago’s patient-facing trial finder and navigation assistance empower women to take an active role in their healthcare. Ensuring trial results benefit our diverse community requires participation from all populations, acknowledging social determinants of health. Dr. Roque and the EMPACT Chicago project exemplify Lurie Cancer Center’s commitment to reducing health disparities and fostering stronger connections with the communities we serve.



Dr. Marquita Lewis with participants at Brewed Conversations in February 2025

Lurie Cancer Center has a long-standing history of commitment to advocacy, education, outreach and engagement. Our community partnerships and programs aim to identify and address barriers to cancer health equity and improve outcomes in traditionally under-served neighborhoods. Working together with new and existing organizations in our communities, our efforts include:

- Expanding awareness and improving access to cancer services, treatment and clinical trials
- Providing up-to-date information and community-based screening programs to reduce cancer risk and increase early detection
- Identifying the social and economic challenges in under-served neighborhoods to guide our efforts
- Developing educational resources to improve health literacy and raise awareness about follow-up and survivorship care
- Advocating for public policy changes to ease the burden of cancer
- Supporting healthy lifestyle changes to reduce cancer risk

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